

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 OMB-01 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 RSC-01

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R 131313Z DEC 74

FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 772

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

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USNAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY

UNCLAS BELFAST 214

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: CONTROVERSIAL MEETING OF PROTESTANT CLERGYMEN
WITH PROVISIONAL IRA LEADERS

1. CLERGYMEN FROM CHURCH OF IRELAND, METHODIST
PRESBYTERIAN AND UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES MET AS
INDIVIDUALS WITH GROUP LAYMEN IN COUNTY CLARE DEC. 10 IN
PEACE INITIATIVE. PRESS ACCOUNTS STATE AMONG LATTER GROUP
WERE PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN REPRESENTATIVES AND PROVISIONAL IRA
OFFICERS DAVID O'CONNELL, SEAMUS TWOMEY AND KEVIN MALLON.
MEETING PRESUMABLY ARRANGED THROUGH SINN FEIN. PARTICIPATING
CHURCHMEN HAVE STATED THEY DID NOT RPT NOT KNOW IDENTITY OF
THOSE WITH WHOM THEY MET AND RATHER THAN "NEGOTIATING" WITH
IRA THEIR PURPOSE WAS TO EXPLAIN CASE FOR PEACE AND PROPOSE
CEASE FIRE. SOME CHURCHMEN OF GROUP MET NEXT DAY WITH
LOYALIST CENTRAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE WHO UNAWARE OF COUNTY
CLARE MEETING. MEETINGS COINCIDED WITH CAMPAIGN OF PRAYERS FOR
PEACE SCHEDULED FOR DEC. 15 AND SPONSORED BY LEADERS CATHOLIC
AND PROTESTANT CHURCHES BUT APPARENTLY NOT RPT NOT DIRECTLY
CONNECTED. ONE MOTIVE IMPELLING CHURCHMEN APPARENTLY THEIR
CONCERN ABOUT ULSTER TREND TO SUPPORT EXTREMIST POLITICIANS IN
FACE CONTINUING TERRORISM.

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2. THERE MIXED REACTION NORTHERN IRELAND TO MISSION. MOST FAVORABLE REACTION WAS CAUTIOUS APPROVAL OF ANY PEACE INITIATIVE. CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADERS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY, OFFICIAL UNIONISTS, UNIONIST PARTY NORTHERN IRELAND (FAULKNER) AND ALLIANCE PARTY SPOKESMEN VOICED THESE SENTIMENTS. OTHER LOYALIST POLITICAL LEADERS AND CLERGYMEN HIGHLY CRITICAL OF INITIATIVE AND "NEGOTIATIONS" WITH IRA. MOST VOCIFEROUS WERE VANGUARD UNIONISTS AND REVEREND WILLIAM BEATTIE DEPUTY LEADER DEMOCRATIC UNIONIST PARTY (PAISLEY) WHO SAID THAT RATHER THAN PLEADING WITH IRA FOR PEACE IRA SHOULD BE BATTERED INTO THE GROUND.

3. THERE HAS BEEN RELATIVE LULL IN PROVISIONAL IRA TERRORIST ACTIVITIES NORTHERN IRELAND DATING ROUGHLY FROM BIRMINGHAM BOMBINGS. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THIS DUE TO DECISIVE POLICE ACTION IN ENGLAND AND NEW RESOLVE PART BRITISH PEOPLE AND POLITICAL LEADERS. OTHERS SEE IRA AS SUFFERING CONSIDERABLE ATTRITION IN NUMBERS AND SUPPORT RECENTLY AND CONSEQUENTLY UNABLE MOUNT ATTACKS. TACTICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE FOR PROVISIONAL IRA IN DECLARING CHRISTMAS CEASE-FIRE MAY BE OUTWEIGHED BY RELUCTANCE APPEAR BE YIELDING FROM POSITION OF WEAKNESS.

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